# THE GIFT OF RAMU by Alexander Baron: FINANCIAL REFORM WEBSITE

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## *The Gift Of Ramu*

Long before he'd been sworn in as President, before he'd even seriously thought of becoming President, before he'd entered politics in fact, James Hunter had been involved in a passionate debate about UFOs. Unlike another Southern-born made good, former Democratic President, Jimmy Carter, Hunter had dismissed the whole idea of UFOs as bunk. "I'll believe in flying saucers the day one lands on the White House lawn", he'd said.

More than three decades later, this skeptic's put-down returned to haunt him, for on the morning of 7th May 20--, just after eight am, as President James Hunter sat eating breakfast with his First Lady Marlene, a silver disk descended silently from the sky and landed softly on the White House lawn.

As the President sat dunking his biscuit in his black coffee and poring over the morning's papers, and as the First Lady, in between tiny nibbles of her low calorie toast flicked through her speech to the Washington Ladies' Institute, a loud rap sounded on the door of their private suite followed by the voice of the President's adjutant, Colonel Oscar South.

"Mr President!"

The President put down his biscuit, turned to face the door then, recognising the voice, which was a full octave higher than normal, he barked, "Come in".

The door barged open and South entered flanked by two stocky military policemen. Both men had their pistols drawn, and as the three marched on his breakfast table, Hunter's heart jumped into his throat. It was only when all three pulled up at the table and saluted him that he realised he was the President of the United States sitting in his bedchamber and not El Presidente of some fascist banana republic, sitting waiting fearfully for the next peasants' revolt or military coup.

"Mr President", snapped South.

"At ease, Colonel", said the President, "has something happened?"

"Yes sir", said South.

Marlene looked up from her speech and said, "Do you want me to leave, dear?"

Hunter waved at her and standing up she said, "Well, Colonel?"

"Madam. Sir, you have a visitor."

"Oh. Who?"

"With respect, sir, I don't think you'll believe me until you see him."

Hunter was perplexed, South was usually such a level-headed type.

"Try me", he said.

"Sir, have you looked out of your window this morning?"

This was a strange question indeed, and for a moment Hunter wondered if the Colonel were ill or if he himself was the victim of an elaborate practical joke. But this sort of behaviour was so totally out of character for South, and the man was so totally devoid of humour that he could rule out the latter. Hunter crossed to the first floor bedroom window and looked down at the lawn. His heart skipped a beat as he took in the saucer; it was perhaps ten feet high and fifty feet in diameter. And, standing in front of it was a bald, comic book type alien dressed in a one piece metallic body stocking. He had delicate features and a large though not enormous head, and he was looking up at the President's bedroom window.

"Do you see him, sir?" asked South.

Marlene Hunter crossed to the window too, and, standing behind her husband, caught her breath and clung to his shoulder for support.

"Yes, I see him", said Hunter.

"He says he has to speak to you, sir, it's a matter of life and death."

"Yes, of course", said Hunter, "you'd b-better have him come up."

"No sir", said South, "he says he can't leave the ship. You have to go down to meet him."

"Oh", said Hunter. Then he stuck out his chin and said, "Well, I am the President of the United States."

"Yes sir."

"And the leader of the world in a sense."

"Yes sir. In every sense."

"That's what they usually say, isn't it? Take me to your leader."

"I don't know, sir. I've never met an alien before", replied South in all sincerity.

Hunter turned to him, "Well, let's go and find out."

"Yes sir."

"Be careful, hon'", said Marlene, "he might be a commie."

James Hunter emerged from the White House alone. After he'd got over the initial shock, any apprehension he might have had about meeting a man from another world evaporated and he dismissed the guards, telling them to go and watch this historic meeting from an upstairs window. "Dig out a couple of cameras from the press office", he added, "I want this recorded for posterity."

The President's logic was simple. As there were obviously no aliens living on any other planet of the Solar System, this fellow must have come from the nearest star if not a good deal further. That meant four or five light years at least. Anyone who could bridge that sort of distance had to come from a civilisation that was hundreds if not thousands of years more advanced than Earth. Which meant that if he wanted to, the alien could probably destroy the White House if not the Earth with the press of a button. Clearly though he hadn't come all this way and demanded to see the leader of planet Earth so that he could do that. Obviously he had a message for the Earth which he intended to impart to the President. James Hunter considered himself less honoured than chosen.

The President closed the door behind him, held up his hand in peace and walked towards the alien.

"Greetings", he said.

“Good morning, Mr President”, said the alien in a matter of fact tone, “I’m sorry to have to interrupt your breakfast but this is a matter of supreme importance.”

“I’m sure it is”, said the President.

“And urgency.”, said the alien, “for me. Please, step inside.”

He gestured to James Hunter who took a deep breath before moving towards the silver disk. As he did so, a seamless partition slid back revealing the illuminated interior. The President walked in, the alien entered the craft behind him, and the entrance closed behind the both of them.

Inside, the craft was massive. The President remembered years ago watching a cult British TV series about a doctor who travelled through time in a police kiosk, a perfectly ordinary looking box about four feet square which somehow contained a massive room.

Something like that was at work here, he could only marvel at this weird science. The alien took the lead and gestured to the President to follow him. “My name is Ramu”, he said.

“Pleased to meet you, Mr Ramu”, said the President.

“I must apologise, Mr President, but you will soon understand.”

He doubted he would. Ramu led him to a sliding door which he opened with a wave of his palm. Stepping inside, he waited for the President to follow him. The door closed behind them and the President’s eyes fell on a bed. It had the appearance of an ordinary hospital bed, for next to it was a drip feed attached to a stand, and at the bottom of the bed was what he took to be a temperature chart. In the bed lay a woman. Like Ramu she was bald, and strange metallic sheets covered her body up to her neck. Her eyes were closed and she was sleeping softly.

“This is my wife”, said Ramu.

“Yes”, said James Hunter, not knowing what else to say.

“She is dying.”

“Oh.”

“Her kidney has failed. I have kept her alive by using a special compound which emulates the kidney’s function, but she needs a transplant. Without one she can survive perhaps four days.”

“I see.”, said the President.

“I must have your co-operation, Mr President. If she dies...”; The alien’s eyes were suddenly filled with tears and his voice was unsteady.

“Of course”, he said again, “is this an operation an Earth surgeon can perform?”

“Yes”, said Ramu, “our bodies are exactly the same as yours except we have only one kidney. But I must have your best surgeon.”

“Of course”, said the President.

“And she must have the transplant. Whatever the cost.”

“Of course”, said the President, “it will be done”. Suddenly a thought occurred to him, “Er, what about compatibility?”

“That will be no problem”, said Ramu, “I have some special drugs in the first aid kit; they will keep her body from rejecting an incompatible kidney until we arrive home. Any kidney will do.”

“Any?” asked the President.

“Any volunteer. A murderer on death row, perhaps.”

“Yes”, he paused, “make me out a list, then leave it to me.”

The first thing he did as soon as he left the saucer was issue an immediate P-Notice – a Presidential black-out under the *1997 Special Powers Act*. Then he told Colonel South to cancel all his appointments for the rest of the week and get onto the Director of the Bethesda Hospital, who was a close personal friend.

By early afternoon an area two miles in diameter around the White House had been sealed off, and three of the top transplant surgeons in the country had been jetted in under military escort. All this time, Ramu had remained inside the craft with his ailing wife. At three o’clock, Hunter led the three well-briefed surgeons into the craft, the entrance opened, and Ramu led the four men into his wife’s bedroom. One of the surgeons made a cursory examination of the patient, and, after asking Ramu a few questions, said there was no reason they could not operate that night.

There was a consensus, and James Hunter said he would arrange for the donor to be brought over at once. The donor was a twenty-six year old woman who’d hacked her unfaithful husband and his lover to death then chopped them up and fed them to her dogs. She had been sentenced to death the previous October but her sentence had since been commuted to life without parole. Hunter hadn’t told her who would be the recipient, but he had given her a written guarantee that her sentence would be reduced to an ordinary life sentence and she would be paroled quietly after serving ten years.

She was brought to the White House in a sealed van and anaesthetised before being transferred to the craft along with the operating team and the entire operating theatre. Dr MacMillan had wanted to transfer the patient to hospital but Ramu was adamant that no way could she leave the craft.

The operation was a success, and twenty-four hours later, with the area around the White House still sealed off, Ramu’s wife rose from her bed and greeted her host.

“You’ve recovered remarkably quickly, Mrs Ramu”, said the President.

She laughed and replied, “We Pleiadians always do.”

He blushed involuntarily, “I hope you’ll stay a while and allow me to show you both the sights. We don’t get many tourists in Washington, at least, not from the Pleiades.”

She smiled sweetly and said, “I am afraid that will not be possible, James Hunter, but my husband would like to speak to you now, alone. He will explain.”

“Of course”, said the President, as Ramu opened the door and gestured him out into the corridor.

“James”, he said, “come with me”, and closing the door behind him, he led the President to the control cabin while his wife returned to her bed. They arrived in the cabin, which, in spite of the disk’s being outwardly totally opaque, looked out onto the White House lawn through several wide portholes.

“James”, said Ramu, “you have been very hospitable and understanding.”

“Well, obviously there are many things we’d like to ask you, but I think it’s clear from the way you contacted us that you only landed here out of necessity. It wouldn’t be right to take advantage of such circumstances.”

“You are correct”, said Ramu, “although necessity is an understatement. Desperation is a far more appropriate word. As you are probably aware, there is an understanding between the more advanced members of the Cosmic Federation that primitive

civilisations – that includes yours, I'm afraid – are not to be tampered with. They are to be left to find their own way and to develop their own technologies come what may. I am honour-bound to adhere to this code. Yet from the little that I know of your world, it is obvious to me that your civilisation is in deep crisis; you are rapidly destroying your environment, and even more rapidly consuming scarce resources.

I came to you as a stranger in need, and, like the good Samaritan, you took the cloak off your back and shielded me from the storm."

James Hunter blushed slightly, and Ramu continued, "Forgive me if I mix my metaphors, my comprehension of your languages is far from perfect, but I'm sure you understand what I'm trying to say."

It sounded like "thank you", but Ramu obviously had more in mind, for he continued, "Honour-bound as I am not to interfere in the destiny of your planet, I am bound even more to honour your unselfish friendship."

He walked over to a built-in cupboard in the cabin wall, waved his palm over it, and the door opened magically. Removing a large cylinder which resembled a gallon paint tin, he walked over to the desk and placed it gently on the top. Then he returned to the cupboard and took out something resembling an A4 size plastic folder.

"Your gift to a stranger in need was life. This", he said, "is my gift to you."

"Thank you very much", said the President, "Er, what is it?"

Ramu smiled, "In your tongue you would call it a cold solar cell."

"Cold solar cell?"

"Yes."

Ramu removed the top of the cylinder and said, "You pour the fuel in here and it breaks down giving off electricity. This is a small model, but you can use the blueprint to make larger ones." He tapped the folder.

"I see", said the President, "What fuel does it use?"

"Anything organic. On my planet we keep batteries of these things at sewage farms."

"Sewage?"

"Yes. Provided the fuel is liquid or mostly liquid and contains carbon, hydrogen and oxygen, it will emit electricity. The cell replenishes itself from trace elements in the fuel, so it will last about fifty Earth years after which it must be replaced. One this size will generate enough energy to run nine or ten 13 amp plugs continuously, which is probably sufficient for the average household."

"Oh, easily", said the President, "and what happens to the fuel?"

"It is broken down into water and salts. The water evaporates, the salts can be spread on the land or turned into animal feed."

"And uh, it needs sunlight?"

"Not direct sunlight, the light of an ordinary room is sufficient. All the technical data and specifications are in the manual. It may sound as though it violates the law of conservation of energy but it doesn't. It's just something rather simple that your scientists have overlooked."

"I don't know what to say", said James Hunter.

"One word of warning; this must be used for the benefit of all mankind. If it is, it will solve your energy and environmental problems until your species is ready to join mine in the conquest of space; if it is not, it will cause bitterness, hatred, social unrest and even

war."

"Oh, believe me, Ramu, this is something which 'will' be used to benefit 'all' mankind, I swear. Future generations will make you a saint."

Ramu laughed.

"Heck, they'll probably make me a saint", this time the President laughed; the idea of St James of the White House appealed to him greatly.

Then it was all over: the alien departed as suddenly as he'd arrived, leaving no trace of his ever having been.

As the disk disappeared into the sky, James Hunter's thoughts turned immediately from the wondrous device Ramu had given him to the more pressing matter of covering up the aliens' visit. This was something he had discussed with his advisory council while the surgeons were performing the operation. It would be out of the question for the truth to be revealed to the world. In the first instance, it would probably cause an international panic; in the second, who would ever believe it?

Ramu had gone and left no trace of his ever having been here. True, they had filmed the craft, but Hollywood could do wonders with film nowadays, no mere film, however convincing, however well authenticated, would be sufficient proof of extraterrestrial contact. As he set about instructing his internal and external security and the media about what line they should take, he all but forgot the magic, free power device the alien had given him; it was shut up in a small room at the back of the White House.

It wasn't until the following week that he mentioned it to Colonel South. The Colonel was intrigued and asked him if he believed it did everything Ramu had said it could.

"Well, I was certainly impressed at the time", said the President, "but heck, a guy drops out of the sky and says here's a free source of energy for you, you'd be impressed too."

"We'd better try it out, Mr President, just you and me. I'll arrange for someone from the Pentagon lab to come over, but I would suggest you mention it to no one in the meantime, including the First Lady."

"Heck, no", he said, "that was the last thing on my mind."

The following day an electronics engineer attached to the Pentagon's research and development department came over and the three men examined the device in minute detail together. The engineer had it up and running in half an hour, and in another hour had figured out how it worked. Laughing to himself he said, "Mr President, this is so simple that it's a wonder no one has thought of it before. On this planet, anyway."

"Spare us the technical details", said James Hunter, "and remember, no one is supposed to know about our friend's dropping in on us."

"Oh, it's too late for that, Mr President, it's all over town."

"And in the *National Enquirer*, said South, "so let's keep it that way."

The engineer gave a wry grin. The *National Enquirer* was the most scurrilous tabloid newspaper in America, and had often run stories about aliens dropping out of the sky, usually to visit brothels or to ravish some scantily dressed nymph.

"Is it as good as he says?" asked the President.

The engineer nodded his head, "And more so. I'd say Mr President that as soon as you authorise the funds we can start churning these out in...a month, six weeks at most. By

the end of the year there's no reason why every home in Washington can't have one, and in three or four years at most, every home in the Continental United States."

"What about developing them for industry?" asked South.

"Oh, no problem. Obviously the larger ones will take longer to manufacture, we may have to redesign the photocells slightly – it's not simply a case of multiplying everything by a factor of ten, fifty or whatever – but I don't anticipate any problems. What I would suggest though Mr President is that you concentrate on making exact copies of this. This size and output will be ideal for the average household."

"You think that's the optimum strategy?"

"It's ideal. With one of these installed in every home we won't need to run mains cables to housing estates and residential areas. That means regional and local autonomy. Think about it. You construct a holding tank which can be placed in the attic, the basement or a cupboard, all it needs is a strong light. You fill the tank with liquid waste from the john. Mr and Mrs Public get up in the morning, check that the tank is full up, maybe refill it, and that's it. They keep a back-up cell in case the primary cell fails...it really is that simple."

"I see. And we can start constructing these things right away?"

"Sure thing. A decade from now we'll have totally free energy, not just the United States but the entire world. The only energy requirement will be for replacement cylinders, the real cost of which will be a tiny fraction, maybe .001 per cent the cost of digging coal, extracting oil or nuclear power. And of course there'll be no pollution either, just the opposite in fact."

The President nodded his head and repeated "So we can start building these things right away."

"As soon as you authorise the funds, Mr President, the Pentagon will begin manufacturing them."

"The Pentagon?" he asked, "I was thinking of this as a private enterprise project."

The engineer shrugged his shoulders, "I suppose it would make good commercial sense, but this sort of strategic development is usually undertaken by the military."

"Strategic?" said James Hunter, "there's nothing strategic about this. Is there?"

"Well..."

"I mean, there's no reason why the Russians couldn't copy the technology, is there?"

"The Russians are on our side now, sir", prompted Colonel South.

"Or anyone?"

"No", said the engineer, "I just thought that..."

"Well you thought wrong."

"Yes, Mr President."

"Besides, this technology isn't ours to develop alone, and certainly not to sell. This was a gift, a gift of the gods one might say. I was told it must be used for the benefit of all mankind, and I intend to see that it is used for exactly that."

"Yes, Mr President."

"Do you agree, Colonel South?"

"Of course, Mr President." The Colonel turned to the engineer and said, "If you'll excuse us, Dr Forester, there are one or two things the President and I have to discuss."

"Of course", he said, "I'll leave this in your hands then. Colonel. Mr President." He shook hands with both men, and James Hunter summoned one of the guards to escort

him from the White House. The President had a busy schedule for the rest of the week, and although locked in a White House store room was potentially the greatest gift to mankind since Prometheus stole the fire from Heaven, he couldn't just drop everything and begin manufacturing solar generators. He spent most of the evening in conference with Colonel South, discussing their next step.

"I suggest you postpone everything connected with this device until we return from Europe, Mr President. We'll only be gone a week, but once that tour is out of the way you'll have the best part of a month in which to formulate a plan."

"Good thinking, Colonel. Er, what do we have to plan, exactly?"

"Well, for one thing, sir, we have to give this device a name?"

"Er, yes. Any suggestions?"

South paused for a moment then replied, "We could name it after the alien."

"The Ramu machine?"

"Something like that, sir. It would be nice to honour him, even anonymously."

"Yes. How about the Ramulator?"

"Sounds fine, sir."

"Right, the Ramulator it is then."

"Next we have to decide how we're going to fund production of it, obviously production will have to be licensed."

"Licensed?" asked the President.

"By the U.S. Government, sir."

"By us?"

"Of course. Every machine has to be licensed; it has to be built to certain standards and specifications, if only from a health and safety point of view."

"Health and safety?"

"It's new technology, sir. Not just new, alien. What if something were to go wrong with it?"

James Hunter couldn't imagine what, but it was always a good idea to err on the side of caution.

The following week he made his whirlwind European tour, meeting various heads of state and financiers, then returned to the White House and retired from public appearances for the best part of a fortnight. Not that he wasn't busy, he had mountains of paperwork to wade through, but he did have time to discuss the manufacture and marketing of the Ramulator with Colonel South. "I think we should set up an American-European consortium, Colonel", he said, when they were alone together.

"Sir?" asked South.

"I was thinking, remember that representative of Rothstein we met at the Brussels banquet, what was his name?"

"De Beer, sir?"

"De Beer, yes, that was him. When we were talking afterwards he said something about co-operating with the United States on future energy projects. His bank is already funding the new European Development Agency. He dropped a broad hint that in future they would be interested in working with us on similar projects. That fits to a tee."

“Oh no, sir, we have to use a US bank.”

“Well, they are partly American, banking is an international business; they’ve got branches in New York and here in Washington, I believe.”

“Yes sir, but they’re not”, South writhed, “American American.”

“American American?”

“Old stock, sir.”

“Old stock?”

“Anglo-Saxon.”

The President was shocked at the implication, “You mean they’re...”

“Er, well sir, yes.”

“Colonel South, I hope that isn’t anti-Semitism.”

“Oh no sir, but what I mean about Jewish bankers is that you can’t trust them.”

“You can’t?”

“No sir, everybody knows that.”

“Then why do so many people do business with them if everybody knows they can’t be trusted?”

“I don’t mean you can never trust them, sir. What I mean is that with something as new and innovative as the Ramulator, they’d just spoil everything. Let’s go and see Rockman sir, like we agreed before. He’ll explain.”

“Very well, Colonel, make an appointment first thing in the morning.”

“Yes sir.”

“With David Rockman himself.”

“Yes sir.”

“And Colonel.”

“Yes sir?”

“Not a word about this to anyone; this is still top secret.”

“Yes sir, I understand.”

Two days later, James Hunter and his trusted lieutenant visited the mega-banker at his Washington penthouse flat. Rockman spent most of his time in New York, when he wasn’t jetting around the world in one of his private aircraft, but he was in Washington at present to attend a conference.

They greeted each other like old friends, as to some extent they were; Rockman had put up a considerable amount of the capital for Hunter’s presidential campaign, and Hunter himself had been a member of Rockman’s Foreign Relations Committee for a number of years. This was a private think-tank which nevertheless exerted considerable influence over US foreign, and to an even greater extent, domestic, policy, in spite of its name.

After drinks and pleasantries, the banker said, “Well James, I presume this visit has something to do with the space man who landed on your lawn before your European trip.”

Hunter laughed, “You heard about it too, huh?”

“I did”, said Rockman, “but I’m not sure what to make of it. My man at the *Washington Post* says it was a Chinese scientist whose developed a new type of laser.”

This wasn’t far off the mark; Hunter had no way of knowing how much the banker really

knew, but it had been impossible to keep the entire thing a secret, especially from the most powerful non-politician in the United States.

"Well, that's pretty close, David", he said, "except that it really was a spaceman."

The banker laughed, sat down in his deep armchair and said, "I should have known." Colonel South pulled up an adjacent chair as the President sat opposite the banker.

"Okay", said Rockman, "now what can I really do for you?"

"Well, David, before he left, he gave me this." He gestured to Colonel South, who opened the plastic bucket he'd brought with him, and which had so far passed without comment from their host. As South removed the cylinder from the bucket the banker glanced at it momentarily then looked straight back at the President.

"Who gave you this?"

"Ramu."

"The scientist", said Rockman, "now I see. Is he still here?"

"No, he's gone back."

"Oh, pity. Never mind. What does the government know?"

"The government?"

"The Chinese government."

"Nothing", said James Hunter, "why should they?"

"Don't they know he came here?"

"I doubt it. I doubt they'd believe it in any case. I wouldn't have if he hadn't landed on my lawn."

The banker's nose twitched and he said, "Landed on your lawn?"

"Yes."

"Who?"

"Ramu."

"Ramu the Chinese scientist landed on your lawn?"

"No David, Ramu is a spaceman from the Pleiades."

Rockman paused then nodded his head, "Oh, I see," he said.

"You see, sir," put in Colonel South, "he only stopped here because his wife was ill."

"His wife was ill?"

"She needed a kidney transplant, and in return he gave me this."

Rockman wasn't quite sure if he was being wound up, and replied, "Let me get this straight, James, Colonel. You're saying that a spaceman named Ramu landed on the White House lawn, asked you to arrange a kidney transplant for his wife, who just happened to be travelling with him, then gave you a metal cylinder before he flew off?"

"Yes, David. I thought you knew. You said..."

"I know what I said. That's what I was told, but I didn't believe it, for God's sake. You're saying that an alien landed on the White House lawn?"

"David, the reason we came to see you is because of this." He pointed to the cylinder, "It's a miracle, David."

"I'm sure that after what you've seen it must be pretty ordinary."

"Yes, of course, David, but it's a free power source."

"Virtually," put in South.

The two men explained the operation of the Ramulator to the banker, who seemed suitably impressed. At length he said, "This is amazing, the greatest development since

the wheel."

"Yes," said South, "it will mean that the United States will no longer be dependent on oil."

"Or gas," added the President, "that means we can withdraw totally from the Middle East."

"Er, totally?" asked Rockman.

"Yes, David. In a way it will mean the end of American Imperialism, but with free power it won't matter a damn. Heck, this could mean the end of government as we know it. With free power there will be no more wars. What will be the point when nobody needs oil anymore?"

"That's a bit of an exaggeration, James, people will always need oil. And coal."

"True," said South, "but only a tiny fraction of what they need now. I think what the President means is that with the increased standard of living for all this will bring, no one will be inclined to fight wars anymore."

"Something like that, Colonel," said James Hunter, "the point is that oil, coal and related energy industries employ vast amounts of labour and materials and account for a major portion of national expenditure worldwide. Then there's import-export. Think how much time, human effort and money is expended transporting oil and coal from one country to another. Think of the 1990's Gulf War. That wouldn't have been necessary if the world had had a free power supply."

"I always thought the purpose of the Gulf War had been to liberate Kuwait from the tyranny of the dictator Saddam Hussein," said the banker, cynically.

"It was," put in South, "but Saddam would never have invaded Kuwait in the first place if he'd had free power. Half the wars in history would never have been fought if the gift of Ramu had been made to an earlier age."

"Quite," put in James Hunter, then he looked the banker in the eye and his own eyes shone with the light of a rare idealism which had probably not been seen in any US President or politician since the Founding Fathers had signed the Declaration of Independence.

"David, we are standing at the dawn of a new age, from now on the peoples of the Earth will be richer in worldly goods than ever before. And in spirit, for mankind will be able to throw off the shackles and worry of constantly seeking new energy sources. And pollution. Just think, David: no more oil, no more coal, no more nuclear power either, no more pollution, no more war...It sounds like Paradise."

It may have sounded like Paradise to the President, but to the banker it sounded like falling share prices. He didn't take in the full implications at once, but after Hunter and South had left, he sat in his chair for a long time pondering on the implications for the Rockman Group of Companies, which included Stafford Oil, large tranches of other oil companies, and investments in coal, uranium, gas and associated industries.

Rockman decided to sleep on it before doing anything rash, but try as he may, he couldn't sleep at all that night, and he was behind his desk before seven the next morning making calls to various experts in different parts of the world enquiring, hypothetically, what would be the effect on share prices in his various companies and trusts in the advent of a new wonder technology.

To a man, the prognosis was pessimistic; the vision he'd had the previous day and

brooded over into the small hours was confirmed. A machine as radical as this would certainly mean prosperity for the poor of the world, but it would mean financial disaster for him. Rockman sat at his desk virtually all day venturing out only for a cup of coffee and to use the men's room. By three o'clock he had decided on a drastic course of action; picking up the red phone he rang his brother Winston who ran the Toronto branch of the family bank.

"Hello, Winny," he said, "this is David. Do you remember about six years ago when we had some trouble in London? I thought you might. I want you to get in touch with that Irishman again. Yes, that's him, Sparky. Tell him I've got a special job for him. Yes, here in Washington."

The following Thursday there was the most dramatic incident at the Pentagon since Hunter's predecessor had accidentally ordered the launch of an inter-continental ballistic missile against North Korea. No one knew how the fire started, but the enquiry the following week ruled out arson. James Hunter thought it strange that it should have broken out in the very warehouse in which the Ramulator had been stored; South clearly also had his suspicions, but fortunately by this time the blueprint for the machine had long been transferred to floppy disk and uploaded to a dozen military and other computers in the special Presidential code.

As soon as news of the fire had been made public, Rockman himself had been on the phone to the White House, a note of anxiety in his voice. Strangely, this anxiety had turned not to joy but to disappointment when Hunter had given him the news. At least, that was what it had sounded like to the President, but he dismissed the idea as soon as it entered his head; it was clearly absurd even to suspect the banker.

After all, he would stand to make billions of dollars out of the Ramulator. All the same, he confided with South that in future only the two of them were to be privy to confidential information about the device.

South agreed. The following week the two men met with Rockman to discuss the marketing of the Ramulator in greater detail. As soon as he realised that although the machine had been destroyed, the blueprints were safe, Rockman had put together a team of experts and thrown himself into the production and marketing strategy with great enthusiasm. The meeting at the banker's penthouse flat consisted of the President, South, the banker himself, two scientists, a PR man and an economist.

The strategy was as follows: the research and development department at the Pentagon would manufacture a hundred of the terrestrial prototypes which would be exhibited around the United States, two in each state.

A new company would be formed, 'Ramuterra', which would issue shares in the new stock. Initial capitalisation was to be ten billion dollars. A special and totally independent fund would be set up by Rockbank in order to advance loans to companies and individuals who wanted to take advantage of the new issue but did not have sufficient liquid assets.

This plan of campaign was followed to the letter, and in due course it was announced to the American public that a new source of renewable and virtually free, energy, had been developed by the U.S. Government.

James Hunter was a little disappointed that it had not been possible to credit the alien

with bringing the gift of eternal energy to the planet Earth. They had considered informing the public of the truth, but this would have created so many problems that a decision was taken by the President and his inner sanctum to consign the secret of Ramu's visit to a special security file that would remain closed for a hundred years. Besides, it soon became clear to all concerned that there were far more pressing terrestrial problems caused by the advent of the Ramulator than that of crediting their mysterious benefactor. The share issue went ahead with much fanfare and the unanimous approval of economists of all political persuasions: Republican, Democratic and radical. The only person who seemed to have any reservations at all was Colonel South.

South it seemed had been talking to a young major in his old regiment, Clifford Douglas, who had some rather peculiar ideas about both banking and the stock market. He'd been reading some old books by obscure English authors: Arthur Kitson, an inventor and industrialist; two noblemen – an Earl of Tankerville and a Duke of Bedford; and a Nineteenth Century American populist, Mrs Sarah Emery.

Douglas had been convinced somehow that rather than the Rockbank issuing loans in order to advance to purchasers of shares in 'Ramuterra', the shares should be issued free.

South admitted that this idea bore a great deal of sense, and indeed wondered why no one had ever thought of it before. Douglas said that people 'had' thought of this before, then he went on to tell South about a centuries' old conspiracy between a secret cabal of bankers and Freemasons to control all the world's gold.

At this point, South began to suspect that Douglas was three sandwiches short of a picnic, a suspicion that was confirmed when the Major was shortly admitted to Bethesda military hospital suffering from a nervous disorder. He committed suicide two months later, a sad end to what was an otherwise fine brain and promising military career.

All the same, South hadn't quite been able to get what the Major said out of his mind. The fact that someone had some bizarre ideas didn't mean that everything he said was total claptrap. After all, Sir Isaac Newton had dabbled in alchemy; that hardly invalidated the laws of motion!

However, the working advisory committee which by now had been set up under the auspices of Rockbank and the Pentagon was unanimously opposed to the idea. Rockman in particular was appalled, and as he, together with the President, was co-chairman of the committee, the idea was stillborn.

South did take the President aside on one occasion and try to convince him of the soundness of the idea, but Hunter, modest man that he was, admitted freely that he had never understood the slightest thing about economics, and though he conceded that it sounded good, was convinced that it must contain a well recognised fallacy which they had both of them failed to see on account of their lack of formal training.

South nodded in acquiescence but, remaining firmly unconvinced, withdrew several books on economics from the Pentagon Library. Later he went along to the Library of Congress and read up on economic theory in more depth, but he received not the slightest satisfaction. When it came to the so-called credit multiplier, every single book on economics concurred that banks had always created credit, and that as this was the way it had always been done, this was the way it must be done always and forevermore.

South though wasn't so sure, he could see that the economists had a point as far as

conventional money and wealth was concerned. But here they had been given a free source of energy, or near enough a free source, and it seemed not only economically wrong but morally wrong to sell it.

South continued to ponder this anomaly, but soon he had to ponder it elsewhere. He was eased off the committee at the suggestion of Rockman. The banker suggested covertly to Hunter that although South was undoubtedly a fine soldier and a*ide de camp*, he was so totally ignorant of the issues here that he should be replaced by an expert.

Hunter, being ignorant of the issues himself, accepted the suggestion and arranged for South to be given a lateral promotion. He suggested too that perhaps he himself should resign from the committee in order to make way for another expert, but the banker would hear none of it.

It seemed an age before the first terrestial Ramulator came off the assembly line, but eventually, with much fanfare, the domestic version of this wondrous new machine was made available to Washington residents.

It retailed for five hundred dollars, a very much lower price than the banker had wanted, and one that had been suggested and haggled for by the President himself. At one point Rockman wished he had accepted James Hunter's suggestion that he resign from the committee, but on second thoughts his remaining was not such a bad idea. The President being the nominal head gave the committee a veneer of legitimacy; most of the time Hunter would be far too busy with affairs of state to involve himself with its day to day running and policy making decisions.

The following spring, European factories began manufacturing Ramulators under contract from the United States, and for about three years everything went smooth as clockwork. But after that the economies of the world became slowly distorted. For one thing, unemployment rose steadily but surely in both the energy industry proper and its ancillaries. All the countries of the world imported less and less oil, and the demand for coal virtually ceased completely. In the winter of the third year there was a massive slump on the world stock exchanges as energy stocks and futures fell by seventy percent virtually overnight.

It was the biggest one day drop since Black Monday in the 1980s, and this time it looked like being permanent. Rockman wasn't hurt in the slightest as he had helped precipitate the fall by selling all his energy holdings in one tranche. He had also made it clear that he had no intention of buying back anything no matter how low the price fell.

One would have thought the Arab nations would have been particularly badly hurt by this sudden slump, but as they had invested heavily in the second, third and fourth issues of 'Ramuterra' they not only weathered the storm but made a profit. The following year both they and many Third World countries began exporting Ramulators to the United States. As the cost of labour in these countries was far cheaper than in the West, this led to an immediate unemployment crisis throughout both the new Western Free Trade Zone and the EEC.

James Hunter was perturbed that the committee had not foreseen this development, and for once Rockman too appeared to have been caught napping. One evening, as the President was sitting in his easy chair by the fire, he found himself thinking: what would

South do?  On impulse he picked up the phone and dialled his aide's number. South answered the phone almost immediately, and the President put the question to him: how was it that this wondrous piece of new technology was causing more economic problems than it was solving? "I don't understand it," he said, "we've saved tens of billions of dollars on oil and coal already; we can produce more energy now with environmental-friendly, renewable Ramulators than we could ever with oil, coal and uranium. Yet instead of saving money all we're doing is throwing people out of work."

"It does seem odd, doesn't it, sir?"

"It's worse than odd, Colonel. We've got a major strike on our hands at the moment. The power workers' union have said they're going to close down New York State as a protest against mass redundancies."

"At the weekend, yes sir, Mr President. I had heard, sir."

"Well Colonel, I'd certainly appreciate any suggestions you have on this score."

"Thank you, sir."

There was a pause, then the President realised that South had finished speaking, so he added, "I mean like now, Colonel."

"Yes sir. Well, as I see it, the problem is not to create work but to distribute the goods and services this new form of virtually free power has given us. Do you understand, sir?"

"Frankly Colonel, no."

"Oh. I was reading about it in some old books on financial reform."

"On financial what?"

"Financial reform, sir."

"Not that commie stuff, Colonel, I hope? That's been long discredited."

"Oh no, sir, not that share the wealth and workers' control rhetoric, but proper financial reform."

"As opposed to improper, Colonel?"

"It's all to do with Albus, Mr President."

"What's Albus, Colonel?"

"Who sir. Albus was a person."

"I don't care who he was, just get over here as soon as possible and tell me about it."

"Tonight, sir?"

"No, it'll have to be Wednesday. You're on leave, aren't you?"

"My leave is up tomorrow, Mr President. If you remember you put me in charge of the enquiry into the security leak over Millergate."

"Oh yes."

Millergate was a minor scandal involving a former White House security officer who'd become involved in a forged ticket racket.  This had led to all manner of allegations being made against a former Vice President, but even if any of these had been substantiated they would not have affected the present adminstration.

The following Wednesday as scheduled, South gave him a brief resumé of the Albus proposals for financial reform. The point was that the purpose of the financial system should be to distribute the goods and services the community demanded and was able to create. At least it should have been. In reality though it was used for a variety of other purposes. One was to enable banks and other corporations to move billions of dollars around the world at the touch of a button in response to minor fluctuations in interest

rates. This created great wealth for a few people, on paper, but did not generate any real wealth.

Another, and far more sinister purpose of the financial system, was to keep the peasants in line, as South put it. James Hunter thought this all sounded very conspiratorial but South told him that over the past few months he'd made a careful study of the financial system and the *modus operandi* of its controllers, and that it was less a conspiracy than a mind-set.

"What are you saying, Colonel?" the President asked at length.

"What I'm saying sir is that we have to inflate the economy?"

James Hunter's heart skipped a beat when he heard that dreaded word. "Inflation! Colonel, are you out of your mind?"

"Well sir, the point is that there is an acute shortage of purchasing power."

"I understand that, Colonel," he said, "but inflation will simply push the costs of goods and services up." Then he added as an afterthought,"And throw us out of office."

"No sir," said the Colonel, "that's what you're led to believe by economists, but they all work for the banks."

"They don't, Colonel," said the President, "some of them work for the universities, and some work for the government."

"Yes sir, but they're all Marxist-oriented."

"Marxists? Commies? In the US government?"

"No sir, not Marxists, but Marxist-indoctrinated. The point is that none of these people can see further than their noses. They're all either trying to maximise the profits of the banks or to create full employment."

"And you say we don't need full employment, Colonel?"

"This is what Albus and others have said sir. We're moving towards a fully automated society. Probably that will never come, we'll always need doctors, dentists, TV anchormen and the like, but many of the manual jobs of the past will simply become redundant, indeed they have already. The result is that capital is concentrated into fewer and fewer hands. This is one of the few correct predictions that Karl Marx ever made. The other thing is that although the workforce will continue to shrink, those people in work will have more and more purchasing power. Which is good news for them..."

"But not for the people out of work, eh Colonel?"

"What I was going to say sir is that this is good news for them until it comes to paying for all the people out of work."

"Through their taxes?"

"Correct sir. Now the conventional economic system requires the government to tax those in work to pay doles and welfare for those who are out of work. And what the government can't meet by taxation it borrows from the banking system."

"That's right, Colonel, but at least it doesn't cause inflation."

"Oh but it does sir, the money the government borrows has to be repaid at interest, which it can find only either by further taxation or by further loans. Further loans from the banking system will simply drive up the national debt, while further taxation deprives those in work of purchasing power."

"So you say the government should just print the money, Colonel?"

"The point is sir, that the Ramulators give us free or nearly free energy, and that

corresponds to an increase in wealth. If there is increased wealth in the country and no increased purchasing power to buy it..."

"There's a slump!"

"Precisely, sir. This is what happened during the Great Depression. The government was too worried about balancing the budget, the last thing the government ever needs to do is to balance the budget."

He frowned, but South went on: "The thing that always puzzled me, sir, is if the government is in hock to the banking system, who are we actually in hock to?"

"The people who lend money to the bank, of course. Depositors, you and me."

"So what you're saying sir is that we are in debt to ourselves. With respect sir, that is absurd. Anyway, the banks don't actually lend the money of their depositors, they create the credit at the point of loan issue. This then goes out to entrepreneurs and other borrowers, and when it returns it is cancelled out of existence."

"Cancelled out?" asked the President, now thoroughly bewildered.

"Cancelled out. Except for the interest, which is the bank's profit. Less its overheads, of course."

"But doesn't the bank have to pay its depositors interest, Colonel?"

"Yes sir, but the point is that the bank has this money on deposit all the time."

"I see." He paused and then asked, "And if the bank doesn't charge interest, it makes no profit, right?"

"The bank should not be entitled to make any profit on something given to us for free, sir."

"Free?"

"Yes sir. Isn't that what Ramu told you? That this new technology must be used for the benefit of all mankind?"

"Yes, yes, you're right, Colonel." He had told South about Ramu's warning many times since that fateful encounter, but suddenly he was all too conscious of the fact that he hadn't heeded the alien's wise words. The Ramulator was not being used for the benefit of all mankind, it was being used to enrich a banking cartel.

"Where does all the money go to, Colonel, on the profits the bank makes by creating credit?"

"That really is a bit of a mystery sir, but what I can say is that certainly since the inception of the Federal Reserve in 1913 the United States has been going progressively in hoc to the banking system. This is why we have the absurd spectacle of virtually annual tax increases. Society itself has never been wealthier, the true wealth of society is the goods and services it can provide, which means primarily new technology, and human hands and brains to use it, of course. Yet all the time we're told that rather than resources becoming more bountiful, they're becoming scarcer. Resources are not becoming scarcer sir."

"But money is, Colonel!" He thumped the table, and suddenly he saw through the fog, saw through it with crystal clarity.

"Precisely, sir."

"I think we should tell Rockman something needs to be done."

"With respect sir, I think Rockman is the last person we should tell."

"Oh, why is that?"

“He’s part of the problem sir, the vested interest of usury capitalism.”

“He is?!”

“Of course sir, your predecessor took on the bankers.”

“Richard Powers?” said the President with some surprise; he had never considered the previous occupant of the Oval Office to be any sort of reformer, much less a financial reformer.

“No, sir,” said South, lowering his voice, “Mr Lincoln.”

“Mr Lincoln?” He was perplexed. “Abraham Lincoln?” he all but shouted.

“Yes sir, and look what they did to him.”

“Who?”

“The bankers, sir. They killed him.”

“They did?”

South nodded his head slowly. James Hunter didn’t know what to say; he wondered for a moment what sort of bizarre conspiracy theories South had been reading, and was apt to dismiss his aide’s words as flights of fancy, but suddenly a thought occurred to him.“You think Rockman would kill me?”

“Of course not, sir, not in this day and age.” The President heaved a sign of relief, but South added, “There are all sorts of other ways.”

“Other ways?” he asked.

“To skin a cat, sir. Don’t forget that Rockman has enormous power not just in banking and industry, but in the media. It doesn’t take much to start a smear campaign.”

“Smear campaign? But he couldn’t smear me with anything, Colonel. Could he?”

South was well aware of the President’s squeaky clean image, and that this image mirrored his personal and private life exactly. It wasn’t that James Hunter was any sort of saint, it was just that he had never had the imagination for sin. He had been born into a comfortably rich family, had lived a comfortable life, and had never had any illicit love affairs simply because he was at heart quite a boring person, as was his First Lady. For someone who had characteristically been so boring though, he was swiftly becoming extremely imaginitive.

“Could he?” repeated the President.

“Look sir, I know, we all know, that you’ve never come within a mile of any scandal, but the public don’t know that. Suppose someone turns up who claims to have known you twenty years ago and makes all manner of allegations about crooked dealings in real estate, or liaisons with a senator’s wife. You’re not to know what you were doing twenty years ago; if you deny everything and the press picks on some detail you’ve got wrong and blows it up out of all proportion, anything can happen.”

“You think Rockman would go to those extremes, Colonel?”

“You know the way the media operates, sir. If they take a dislike to someone they keep hammering away, they won’t let go.”

“But they don’t dislike me. Do they?” he asked.

“Of course not, sir. But they haven’t been told to. Yet.”

“Yes, I see,” he said, “then how are we going to reform the financial system without appearing to? And without the media blaming us?”

“That’s a good question, sir. I think what we need is to find a front man.”

“Front man?”

“Yes, sir. If we can find an academic who is at least sympathetic to the idea of financial reform, brief him, then if you can get him onto the committee.”

“I see, Colonel. Who have you got in mind?”

“No one yet, sir, but give me a couple of days and I’ll find someone.”

“Very good, Colonel. I’ll see you at the weekend.” James Hunter was rapidly becoming paranoid. He realised that in theory he was the most powerful man in the United States, but of course, the power he wielded was, if not entirely symbolic, then not his to wield for his own purpose. The President was not his own man but a servant of the people. Rockman on the other hand was powerful in his own right; when he pulled strings people jumped for him.

The following week, South told the President he had located a professor of economics who was sympathetic to the subject of financial reform. James Hunter invited Professor Maloney to the White House and listened to what he had to say. After the Professor had spoken at length in a boring monotone about the perceived defects of the current system, the President chirped in, “You uh, don’t share my aide’s views about this being a conspiracy?”

The Professor frowned and said, “Conspiracy?”

“Yes, by Rockman, and bankers generally?”

He laughed this time, “When people are on to a good thing, Mr President, they don’t conspire, they work together enthusiastically towards the same ends. You can see the same vested interests at work in organised crime, the labour movement or anywhere else where one group strives to maximise its profits at the expense of the general public.”

“But Colonel South says banks have a monopoly of credit, as it were.”

“Indeed, but if they didn’t, they wouldn’t be banks.”

“Yes, that’s true,” said the President, “but this creating credit out of nothing, that’s all wrong.”

“So is the war on drugs, Mr President. So are lots of things in our society, but we must strive to put these wrongs right either by legislation or by repeal of legislation.”

“Which must be done in this case?” he asked.

“In the long term, the repeal of the *Federal Reserve Act*. In the short term, we have to increase the purchasing power of the consumer. And we have to make sure that this purchasing power is distributed to everyone.”

“Everyone?” said the President.

“Everyone”, said the Professor.

“Everyone”, echoed South.

“For the benefit of all mankind,” said James Hunter, “not for Rockbank Ltd, not for American business, not even for America, but for all mankind.”

“It is, Mr President, our common cultural inheritance,” continued the Professor. “When an inventor comes up with a new device provided he is granted a patent, he will reap the rewards in fiscal terms, but the entire community benefits. The two best examples are the first two: fire and the wheel. If the man who discovered fire and the man who invented the wheel had been able to patent their inventions, we’d probably still be living under some sort of feudal system now.”

“You’re not suggesting we do away with patents?” asked the President, “people need

incentives. If they don't benefit from their inventions themselves, they won't invent."

"Of course, Mr President. But giving someone a financial reward or recognition for an invention is not the same as allowing him to exploit it for financial gain while the rest of mankind has to eat raw meat or walk everywhere."

James Hunter could see the logic of this argument, but it sounded suspiciously like socialism to him. But South's next words rendered the Professor's arguments superfluous. "If you invent a new power source and decide to exploit it commercially, Mr President, then that is your right. No one would deny you your reward. But we haven't invented anything, the Ramulator was given to us. We are simply its custodians. We have no right to exploit it commercially."

"You're right," he said, "but we have to fund its production somehow."

"The funding for the manufacture of Ramulators must be created debt-free," said the Professor.

"And it must come into circulation in the country where the machines are made. A Ramulator represents a net increase in the wealth of the nation. The money supply of that nation must reflect this. So if for the sake of example Japan manufactures a hundred thousand machines, there must be an increase in the yen in circulation equal to the cost of a hundred thousand. Of course, if the machines are exported, that wealth should come from overseas buyers."

The Professor went on in this vein, and although his ideas became slightly more complex, for once James Hunter found himself not totally lost. He concluded rapidly that although the *minutae* of running an economy may be extremely technical, it could be described in simple terms, and, more to the point, understood in simple terms.

Everyone understood for example that a patient undergoing a heart transplant operation had to have his own heart removed and the donor heart substituted. The operation might be extremely technical, and there would be courses of drugs, exercise and therapy for long afterwards, but the fundamentals could be grasped by any ten year old.

When the Professor finished speaking, the President said he would arrange for him to be drafted onto the committee forthwith. When the two men left him he couldn't help thinking that South knew a great deal more than he was letting on, and that, although he, the President, had initiated this interview, he had been manipulated into it. He determined to find out as much as he could about Professor Maloney, but he seemed to be as obscure an academic as one could hope to meet. Certainly there was nothing in his professional record which could be construed as radical or anti-establishment, and least of all was there anything to indicate that he was any kind of financial reformer.

But if James Hunter found the Professor enigmatic, Rockman didn't like him at all. The banker gave him a lukewarm reception when he was introduced to the committee, eyed him uncomfortably when he took his seat, and when he mentioned debt-free credit, Rockman's eyes lit up in amazement.

A fierce argument followed in which Rockman and the rest of the committee – which, bar the President and Professor Maloney, was made up entirely of his lapdogs – subjected the academic to an hysterical verbal assault.

Did he realise what he was suggesting? Nothing like this had ever been done in the

history of economics, this was lunacy, debt-free money? What would he suggest next?

James Hunter was surprised at the intensity of the onslaught, and even more surprised at the hollowness of the arguments, which seemed to him nothing less and nothing more than vicious *ad hominem* attacks on the Professor.

At one point, Simons, who was Rockman's PR man, suggested that the Professor was a fascist sympathiser because this system of economics was similar to that which had been proposed by Gottfried Feder, the author of the Nazi Party's manifesto. Maloney dismissed the insult with a shrug of his shoulders.

"In the first place this is nothing to do with fascist or Nazi economics. As far as I am aware, as soon as Hitler seized power he dismissed the ideas of Gottfried Feder and resorted to a programme of public works within the framework of a conventional economic system. In the second place, just because the Nazis or any other group of fascists or crackpots once practised or preached a certain economic policy, or any social policy, doesn't mean it is a bad policy *per se*. Hitler was also opposed to vivisection. In the third place, as my wife is the grand-daughter of a Reform Rabbi, I take exception to any suggestion that I am somehow sympathetic to any aspect of fascism."

James Hunter had not spoken much during this debate, nor did he want to. It would be unwise, he felt, to come out too strongly in the Professor's support, so he decided to act dumb, but thought it might be a good idea to suggest that the committee sleep on it.

"Listen, gentlemen, I think this discussion is getting a little too charged with emotion," he interjected. "I must confess that I don't for the life of me understand the Professor's theories, nor yours for that matter, I am only a humble President of the United States when all is said and done, but I do think we ought to consider all possibilities. I wonder therefore if I might ask the Professor to submit a written report for the next meeting?" Turning to Professor Maloney he added, "Have you any objection to that, Professor? And is there anything in particular you would like us to consider?"

"Thank you, Mr President," he said, "I would like the committee to consider the direct issue of credit, debt-free, to the general public. And the abolition of the Federal Reserve system."

There followed what can only be described as a pregnant silence, but the delivery never arrived. Rockman bowed his head in contemplation, and when he looked up he said, "Well gentlemen, it's getting late, and I have to be elsewhere, I'm sure you all do. Mr President?"

"Yes," said James Hunter.

"I suggest we meet here in two weeks and consider the Professor's report. And any other suggestions any of you would like to make. Mr President?"

James Hunter turned to him bewildered, "Er."

"Have you any suggestions to make?"

"Only that I think your suggestion is sound, and I think the committee should consider any proposals anyone, er...proposes."

"That's fine, then," said Rockman, "gentlemen, I think that will be all."

It was certainly all for Professor Maloney, because three days later South rang the President in the middle of the night to drop a bombshell. The academic had been arrested for indecently assaulting a tourist in a public toilet in New York.

“Good grief!” said James Hunter, “are you sure?”

“Sure about the indecent assault? Of course I’m sure, sir. This is a fit-up.”

“Yes, of course,” he replied, now fully convinced that South’s cranky conspiracy theory was anything but cranky. “Rockman?” he said. Ever since that fateful meeting with South and Professor Maloney, he’d seen the hidden hand of David Rockman behind every financial development in the United States for the past ten years, bad and good. He wondered if it were true what South had told him about bankers creating boom and bust cycles in order to enrich themselves at the public’s expense, and decided that it must be at least partially true.

“It certainly sounds like Rockman, sir. The Professor is a bit eccentric, but he’s a married man, and he’s certainly no faggot.”

“What do you want me to do?” he asked.

“I don’t want ‘you’ to do anything, sir. If Rockman decides you’re behind this I dread to think what will happen.”

“But what are we going to do about the Professor? Rockman and his stooges will obviously use this to try to discredit all his ideas.”

“I want you to give me a week’s leave of absence, Mr President.”

“This is a fine time to be taking a holiday, Colonel.”

“I wasn’t planning on that, sir, what I want to do is check this allegation out. I haven’t got any details on the tourist. Yet. But I’ve got a friend who works for the New York Police Department, and he owes me a favour.”

“Oh, I see. When did this alleged assault happen?” he asked.

“This afternoon, sir. The Professor has just been bailed by NYPD.”

“And do the press know?”

“That is what is called an academic question, sir.”

“Yes, I suppose it would be. It’ll be too late to keep it out of the papers then.”

“There’s no chance of that at all; it’s already been on TV, something like senior government financial adviser arrested for indecency.”

“Oh hell.”

“Fortunately they haven’t said that he was the President’s choice.”

“Yet, Colonel?”

“Precisely, sir. I would suggest that when Rockman phones, you express disgust and demand that the Professor be dismissed from the committee forthwith. In the meantime I’ll get onto my friend in NYPD and the Professor himself.”

“Good thinking, Colonel,” said the President, “in fact I think I’ll phone Rockman myself now.”

“Very good, Mr President.”

“And Oscar?”

“Yes, Mr President.”

“Whatever you do in New York, whatever you, your friend and the Professor get up to, I don’t want to know, is that understood?”

“Yes sir.”

As soon as he put down the phone on Oscar South, James Hunter phoned David Rockman, who was still in Washington where he seemed to spend an increasing amount of his time nowadays, probably to keep his beedy eye on him, he thought gloomily.

Rockman had just gone to bed and was obviously not pleased to be disturbed at such an hour, even by the President of the United States. But his brusque tone mellowed almost visibly as James Hunter told him what had happened and then proceeded to denounce the Professor as, “a damned faggot, quack, funny-money pseudo-economist”.

“How on Earth did I ever get talked into endorsing someone like this?” he shrieked, “when this gets out it’ll ruin me. David, I can’t take the rap for this.”

“Of course not, Mr President, we can all make mistakes, and no one will hold it against you that you appointed a man to an important committee who uh, well...”

“But that’s not enough, David,” he said, “God, I have to totally absolve myself of this man, wash my hands of him completely or I’ll be forced to do what Oscar South said.”

“And what did Oscar South say?” asked Rockman.

“That I’ll have to hand the running of the committee over to a team from the Professor’s university.”

“Uh, there’s no need for that, Mr President.”

“But David, I have to dissociate myself from Professor Maloney totally or I won’t be able to go on. The fact that he was appointed by the President will reflect far, far worse on me than it would if you’d appointed him, for argument’s sake.”

“I’m sure that’s not true, Mr President.”

“But it is, David, why, if you’d appointed him, no one would bat an eyelid.” James Hunter tried not to make this sound like a hint, and Rockman was the sort of person who was vain enough to steal somebody else’s idea in order to pass it off as his own. And, sure enough, that was what he did. The following day, Rockman issued a brief press statement to say that he regretted having appointed Professor Maloney to the committee. He couldn’t of course comment on the case as he believed the Professor was vehemently denying the charge, but in any case he had been in need of a rest and he would ask the advice of the President when it came to appointing a new chief economist.

Meanwhile, in New York, Oscar South had traced the tourist who had accused the Professor of indecent assault; the man was an accountant who worked for a small firm in Manchester, England. South decided it might be worth a trip to England to check out both his background and the man’s company. He also interviewed the Professor who swore that he was not any sort of “faggot”, and even if he were he would certainly not have tried it on with a stranger, and a tourist at that, in a public toilet. “There are bathhouses and places where those sort of ... *people* meet,” he said, clearly revolted at the very thought of any sexual contact with another man.

South told him he believed him and that the Professor had obviously been fitted up by the conspiracy. “This is something which has gone on throughout history,” he said.

“Do you think the Illuminati is behind it?” asked the Professor.

“No,” said the Colonel, “David Rockman.”

South took the next available flight to Manchester, England, and checked into a three star hotel. He considered travelling on a false passport; the government sometimes issued special travel and ID documents to important officials who needed to move about discretely, but although South was technically on government service, he thought it best to act here entirely in a private capacity. In England he found the economic climate every

bit as bad as in the United States, if not worse.

Increasingly, society everywhere was becoming more and more polarised between the haves and the have-nots. It was ironic that the Ramulator, the greatest invention since the wheel, had been responsible for this. No, it wasn't the Ramulator, it was the financial system and the people who controlled it, in particular, Rockman, the Rothstein clan and their satellites.

He'd read all about it, and he was worried that they would do to James Hunter what their predecessors had done to Mr Lincoln. He was even more worried that if he were not careful they would do the same thing to himself.

South's visit turned out to be extremely fruitful. The tourist who had complained that he had been indecently assaulted by the Professor was named Richard Allen. And in spite of his being on a modest, middle class salary, he was obviously living in a grand style in England.

South had obtained the man's address from his friend in the New York Police Department, and, hiring a car, he drove out to his house, a detached, Victorian mansion standing in two acres of its own grounds.

He decided against breaking into the house as this would result in real problems if he were caught, but he made a few discreet enquiries of the man's neighbours posing as an American press man; he didn't tell them precisely why he was interested in their absent neighbour, but said simply that the man had been involved in an incident in New York in which a senior member of the US government had been acutely embarrassed. It soon transpired that Richard Allen had lived alone since his mother had died the previous year, which may have explained the house; perhaps she had been a wealthy woman in her own right.

A talkative woman neighbour soon dispelled this suggestion. Mr Allen's mother had passed away at the young age of fifty-one, and her last few years had been spent in considerable pain. She had died of a rare form of cancer, and her devoted son had taken her to the United States on at least two occasions to undergo expensive medical treatment.

That may also have explained why he was on holiday in the States, perhaps he'd liked the place and decided to go back there. Except that his mother had been treated at a private clinic in Florida, which was a far cry from the crowded, polluted, and none too tourist-friendly Big Apple.

South quickly pieced together a conspiracy theory and decided that it may well hold water. The tourist, who was obviously living beyond his means, had been approached by someone to do a favour for an American connection. He had been briefed, flown to New York, and had followed the Professor around until he had gone to the john.

Extraordinary as this story sounded, South could think of nothing else that fitted, except that maybe the Professor was indeed a "faggot", but this seemed highly unlikely.

South was tempted to call at Allen's office but decided against it. He realised that he'd probably done all he could here, and that ideally he should confront the man himself. All the same, he couldn't get the idea out of his head that he should take a closer look at Allen's house, maybe he would find further clues there. Like a cheque for fifty thousand

dollars drawn on the account of David Rockman, he thought to himself, half sarcastically. Although he had already dismissed the idea as foolhardy, he knew he would have to return to the Allen house and break in, whatever the consequences if he were caught.

Half way to Manchester Airport, he turned his hired car around, and, pulling up at a garage to buy some tools for the break-in, Colonel Oscar South began a new career at the age of forty-one. As a burglar. Considering he'd never done anything like this before he was surprised at his prowess. He simply parked the car in the drive-way, walked up to the front of the house, took a quick look around, then walked round the back and forced entry through the French windows. Anything could have happened; there could have been someone staying in the house, there could have been a guard dog, there could have been special security devices, a police patrol could have been making a routine check and caught him *in flagrante delicto*.

But his luck held, and he was soon in the house going expertly through the drawers and cupboards in search of anything the least incriminating. Exactly what he hoped to find he wasn't sure, but he soon came across two items which gave him food for thought. One was a privilege credit card for the Rothstein Bank of Frankfort; the other was a photo album.

South had heard of the privilege card; it was a special charge card issued by several of the leading American and European banks to its most valued customers. In the United States, "most valued" meant anyone earning over two hundred thousand dollars a year. He had no idea what was the limit for British holders, but he figured it couldn't be much less. And certainly it would be way over the head of a humble chartered accountant.

If the privilege card was a mystery, the photo album was bizarre; it contained a lot of ordinary photographs, including family shots and some which were obviously of the owner's late mother. But most of the others were of men, older men, and they were every single one of them either nude or semi-nude. South scooped up the album and the privilege card, switched off the bedroom light, and descended the stairs in the dark. Putting the card in his wallet and the photo album in his case, he drove back to the airport and waited patiently for the first flight the next morning, wanting to sleep but totally unable to close his eyes.

When he arrived back in New York he sealed the card and the photo album in a reinforced envelope and addressed it to himself at the White House, then dispatched the parcel by courier and took a cab to NYPD headquarters. When he arrived, his friend was just about to go off duty; South asked him what had happened to Richard Allen, had he sold his story to the tabloid press, gone to ground or what?

"No Oscar," said Captain O'Flynn, "I think he's staying at the same hotel. The press know where he is but no one's shown any interest."

"Isn't that a bit strange?"

The Captain shrugged his shoulders, "Women are raped every day in this city, every hour, there are occasional sexual assaults on men too, so who'd be interested in some fag academic?"

South nodded his head, obtained the name and address of the complainant's hotel and decided to get a few hours' sleep before he confronted him. He checked into a modest

hotel, rang the White House to get the latest update on the world position, and, after showering, slipped gratefully between the sheets.

That evening he took a cab to Richard Allen's hotel and enquired at the reception desk. "Is he expecting you, sir?" asked the receptionist.

"No," replied South.

"Who shall I say is calling?"

"Er, it's a confidential financial matter," he replied, "I wonder if I might speak to him myself."

He gave her his most seductive smile and she handed him the phone as she dialled the extension. A tired voice answered and South said, "Mr Allen?"

"Yes."

"My name is South, I'd like to talk to you about some mutual friends."

"Who is that?" he asked.

"South," replied South, "Oscar South."

"No," said the voice, "I mean who are the mutual friends?"

"It concerns your account at Rothstein, Mr Allen." South found himself saying. He had to admit that detective work was not his *forte*, neither was tact, but he'd thought about this on the flight and decided that a direct approach would work much better than beating about the bush.

He'd certainly hit a nerve because the voice on the other end of the line now sounded extremely wary. "What about the bank?" it asked.

"We know you've done some work for them, sir."

"Work?"

"Yes. We've seen your photograph album." This was the moment of truth; if South was barking up the wrong tree he'd soon find out. And if he overstepped the mark he'd find himself in serious trouble, perhaps for attempted blackmail as well as burglary.

"Er, oh, I understand," he said, "you'd better come on up."

South knocked on the door and it was answered at once by a tall, powerfully built man of about thirty. "Mr South," he said in a confident voice, "please come on in."

"It's Colonel South, actually," said the clean shaven man in a three piece suit. South cut a rather fine figure and looked very business-like. But if he looked it, Richard Allen certainly was. Jumping the gun he said, "I didn't think they'd have another job for me so soon."

He closed the door and asked if he could order him a drink.

"No thank you," he declined politely.

"Who showed you the photos?" he asked.

This was not what the Colonel had expected and he stalled for time. "Er, we've known about them for some time."

"Yes, I suppose. I didn't really like the idea of stitching up that little twat, what's his name?"

"Maloney?" South put in.

"That's right, it's not my scene, public toilets; I'm a respectable person."

"Of course."

"It was only that no one else was available, and they said they needed someone from out of town to do it."

“They?”

“You know, Rocky.”

South’s heart missed a beat. This could only have meant Rockman himself.

“This is the first time I’ve ever done anything like that, usually I meet my, er, victims, discreetly.”

“You do?”

“Of course, there’s never any need for the photos to get into the papers; most people would rather die than have that happen. Unless it’s with a woman.”

“A woman?”

“Yes, they’ve got a couple of girls who work for them too, but I expect you know that. Who’s the mug this time?” he asked nonchalantly.

South ignored the creeping sensation which ran up his spine and put his arm around Allen’s shoulder. “Ritchie,” he said, “how would you like to have dinner with the President of the United States?”

Although South had been reading conspiracy literature for months, much of it bordering on the lunatic fringe, even he was surprised at the full extent of the network, how it had penetrated every avenue of government and banking, and how it controlled all the major foundations and think-tanks.

James Hunter was a born skeptic so he took a lot of convincing, but his skepticism had faded somewhat in recent months, even more than it had since an alien had landed on his front lawn. And if the truth of this matter sounded bizarre, stranger than fiction and too terrible for a third rate B movie horror script, the facts all pointed in the same direction.

Conspiracy theorists had long claimed that the banking dynasties of Rothstein and Rockman had been locked in a fierce struggle for control of the world economy from the Nineteenth Century. Now, South had ascertained that, rather than being competitors, the two great financial houses were collaborators.

Ownership of the A Stock of the Federal Reserve system seemed to be totally interlocked between the mainly Rockman-controlled banks in the United States, the mainly Rothstein-controlled banks in Europe, and a sprinkling of others elsewhere. At first sight the whole network looked totally independent, but the truth was that the degree of financial control and power concentrated into the hands of two families made them the most powerful force on Earth when acting in unison, as they frequently did.

Richard Allen had been quite a windfall, not only had he been extremely talkative but he appeared to be on first name terms with all the major players. He was not only an accountant but a promiscuous homosexual who had been employed on numerous occasions by powerful people within the Rothstein empire to ingratiate himself with key politicians, academics and other policy makers. There were other people who did similar and often complementary work. In particular there were a number of young women who were employed on the same basis, and there were people who specialised in entrapping their victims in other ways.

One man for instance sponsored academic research through a sophisticated publishing scam; he would turn up out of the blue, praise his intended victim’s work to high heaven, commission a book from him, in the process of which he would lure him onto the board of a company, which would then become embroiled in serious financial

irregularities. The price of the academic's bail out would of course be total obeisance to his mysterious benefactor. It was by using this at times subtle and at other times not so subtle means of keeping key politicians, economists and academics in line that the financial élite had been able to extend its dominance over virtually the entire world.

The President realised how fortuitous he and South had been to establish all this. It had been a cardinal mistake of the Rockman/Rothstein cabal to fit up the Professor in such a sordid and unlikely manner. It would have been far more effective if they had used a woman decoy, or perhaps tried to buy him off with an appointment to a foundation board or academic chair. However, there remained the problem of breaking the stranglehold of the cabal, and in doing this, James Hunter decided they had to put all their cards on the table.

He called a highly secret conference at the White House which was attended by the Professor, South, and a handful of his own, most trusted advisers. After he had been pumped for all the information he could give them, the sordid errand boy of international finance, Richard Allen, was placed under arrest and held *in communicado* at a detention centre just outside Washington by a special Presidential order.

"Will you tell us the problem as you see it, Professor?" said the President.

"I'll do my best, Mr President. The main problem is that the financial system, in particular the Federal Reserve, is a privately owned debt-creation machine. Money comes into circulation as an irredeemable debt under a system that was engineered by a cabal in 1913. The Rockman and Rothstein dynasties are the heirs of this legalised Mafia. The system is rather complicated but basically they control the credit supply of the United States and pretty much the entire world; they fix interest rates and expand and contract the money supply at will. The fact that money comes into existence as an interest-bearing debt – except for the coin and note issue – means that more has to return to the banking system than exists in the first place. So with the best will in the world, which clearly the bankers don't have, the world will go increasingly into debt to the money creators.

However, that is not the only problem. The advent of the Ramulator, and indeed other systems of advanced technology, means that what purchasing power there is, becomes concentrated into fewer and fewer hands. The reason for this is simple, the way most people obtain purchasing power is by earning a wage or salary. Clearly as more and more wealth is created by fewer and fewer people, there are more and more people out of work. The usual answer of governments is to tackle this problem by taxation and using this money to create make-work jobs. In many cases this means totally unnecessary and indeed wasteful work. They'd be far better just paying these people to stand on street corners."

"Where would they get the money for this?" somebody asked.

"The government should print it," replied the Professor.

"But surely that would cause inflation?"

"These people want it both ways," said the Professor angrily, "inflation is caused by too much money chasing too few goods. If you look in the stores they're full of goods; the service industry is running at a surfeit too. Ask the unemployed and the homeless in Washington, New York and other great American cities if they've got too much money and see what they say. The problem is that money has to return to the banking system at least

as fast as it is created. In reality, if goods and services are to increase, the money supply must increase as well."

"Wouldn't this mean an end to open market operations?" asked South, "when banks sell securities they decrease the money supply."

"Correct, Colonel. In the long term we have to reform the money system totally, but in the short term we have to abolish the Federal Reserve and restore the power to create the nation's credit to the Congress."

"I have a feeling this is going to be easier said than done," said the President.

"What if we just place Rockman under arrest?" asked South.

"On what charge?" asked Higgs, who was the oldest man present."

"How about blackmail?" said James Hunter, "to begin with."

"That's a point," said Newman, a career diplomat who had just returned from a lengthy spell in the former Soviet Union.

"That will be a start," said the Professor, "he was certainly the instigator of a conspiracy to frame me for a, er, sordid sexual act. But we have to do a lot more than that. We don't know how much power these people have outside of purely financial control."

"You're not suggesting that the financial élite could mount a *coup d'etat*?" asked the President.

"No, Mr President," said Professor Maloney, "but they may have hit men as well as faggots, hookers and extortionists."

The meeting continued for another hour, and, before they broke up, they had agreed on the outline of a plan which they would put into action over the following weeks.

The *coup* which the President and his men mounted against the vested interests of international finance came quicker than they had anticipated, and when it did, they were surprised at the ease with which the old order was overthrown. The next meeting of the committee, which after several changes of title had eventually been named the Working Committee On Energy And Finance, was held in just under a month's time. After reading the minutes of the previous meeting, the President stood up and said, "Gentlemen, I propose that this committee adopt the following resolution: that from now on the production of Ramulators be managed by the United States Congress, who shall direct that funds to manufacture and distribute all machines, whether for domestic or commercial use, be created debt-free and issued in accordance with the increased wealth of the economy. Do I have a seconder?"

Rockman looked at the President astounded and asked lamely, "Uh, what are you suggesting, Mr President?"

"I am suggesting that this Committee vote for its own abolition and that in future the control of the nation's money supply be placed under the control of the Government of the United States, whose prerogative it should be in any case."

"Oh." said Rockman.

"Is that all?" asked another member.

"For the moment we will settle for taking the creation of credit for the manufacture of Ramulators out of the hands of privately owned banks, but later I will propose that this be extended to the entire money supply."

Richards, a Wall Street economist who had been drafted in by Rockman, piped up,

“Uh, I don’t want to sound rude, Mr President, but aren’t you suggesting something which is totally beyond the powers of the Committee?  This is a committee which was set up specifically to deal with the manufacture of Ramulators not to uh...”

“Audit the Federal Reserve?” suggested the President.

Rockman nearly fell out of his chair.

“David,” he continued, addressing the banker personally, “we will deal with the Fed later, like who owns the A Stock, but for now I’m sure that we can clear up this little ambiguity over the creation of credit to enable the country to manufacture a steady stream of wealth-creating power generators. This was a gift that was bestowed upon us, upon me in particular, to hold in trust for the benefit of all mankind. I’m sure that you would not want it to be used to enrich a few parasitic mega-capitalists at the public’s expense.”

The banker couldn’t believe he was hearing this. James Hunter had obviously gone mad; he opened his mouth to speak, but before he could utter a word, the President continued: “One moment!” Then he shouted at the top of his voice, “Colonel! Bring in the prisoner.”

The double doors to the conference room were immediately flung open and standing in the doorway was a bedraggled, handcuffed and manacled Richard Allen. He was flanked by two enormous military policemen who, taking hold of an arm a piece, swept rather than escorted him into the room. Oscar South, in full military uniform, walked in behind them.

“At ease,” said the President, then he turned back to Rockman and said to him, “David, this is the man who framed your economist Professor Maloney.”

Rockman gulped, “Uh...”

“The story he told us is incredible, a cartel of foreign, Cosmopolitan bankers has hijacked the Federal Reserve System.”

“They have?” said Rockman.

“And, most incredible of all, David, they have done it not only right under your nose but through your bank.”

Rockman feigned surprise; this wasn’t quite the terminology he’d have used but he knew exactly what the President meant.

“This foul group of mainly European bankers has been using the likes of him!” he pointed to the prisoner with dramatic effect, “to blackmail and coerce members of the financial élite into towing their line on credit-creation. And because you had the courage to attack their monopoly, they have targeted you.”

“They have?” said Rockman, incredulously, “I mean, I did?”

“Yes,” said the President, “David, your life is in danger, the House of Rothstein has hired a far left terrorist group to assassinate you because of your appointment of Professor Maloney. I have ordered the Pentagon to take you into protective custody until the terrorists have been apprehended.”

He called out again and a second set of military policemen marched into the room. James Hunter pointed at the banker and said, “Sergeant, arrest that man. For his own protection!”

The two men advanced on Rockman, seized an arm apiece and, as the committee men looked on flabbergasted, hauled the banker to his feet and virtually frogmarched him out of the room. The President turned to Oscar South, who saluted him and asked for

further instructions.

"Take the prisoner away," he said to the military policemen, staring at the manacled faggot in disgust, then turning back to his *aid de camp* he said, "Bring in Professor Maloney."

South disappeared, and reappeared shortly with the Professor. James Hunter smiled benignly at the remaining committee members and said, "Gentlemen, I have had to place Mr Rockman in protective custody for a very simple reason. He would never agree to the proposals I am about to make, and that would undoubtedly endanger his life still further".

"Er, how, may I ask, Mr President?" piped up Richards the Wall Street economist again.

"That would be far too difficult for me to explain," said the President, "however, I am sure that David Rockman would be more than happy to explain. I can arrange for you to join him if you wish."

"Er, no," said Richards, obviously deeply shocked that such a normally easy-going man as the President had suddenly taken on such a forceful manner. He was also in fear of his life as much as anything else.

"That's good," said James Hunter. "Anyone else want to go and ask Rocky about the reason your lives will be in danger unless you do exactly what I say?" To a man they shook their heads and protested vehemently that they understood all too well.

"Good, then," he said, "well, now I will leave the Professor to explain the mechanics of credit-creation to you all. I have other business to attend to."

The other business was to convince Rockman that unless he agreed to go on national TV and call for an audit of the Federal Reserve System, he would pay with his life. This proved remarkably easy as by then South had already convinced the banker that they had gathered enough evidence on him to put him away for twenty or thirty years. The banker had at first insisted that he be allowed to contact his lawyer and would say nothing until he had taken legal advice. "We don't want you to talk, Mr Rockman," said South, "we want you to listen. For the benefit of all mankind. And for your own good," he added in as threatening a tone as he could manage.

The following week the reconvened committee, by now renamed yet again – to the Committee on Energy and Financial Reform – announced that the manufacture of Ramulators would be undertaken by the issue of non-interest-bearing bonds. Later, the Committee announced that it was to set up a working party that would look into the operation of the Federal Reserve and make recommendations as to how this, obviously antiquated, central banking system could be revamped so as to provide cheap credit, the lifeblood of the manufacturing community. During all this time nothing was said about Rockman's preventive detention because this had become a well deserved rest at a nursing home. No details about the banker's nervous breakdown were made public, but it was understood that he had been treated by a special doctor appointed by the President himself.

The audit of the Federal Reserve System caused panic amongst the monied aristocracy, but proceded incredibly smoothly. An Executive Order was passed which required all ownership of the Fed's A Stock to be declared within three months on pain of forfeiture. There were loud protests from the Federal Reserve Board itself, but James

Hunter overcame that problem by sacking the lot of them.

Not a single owner of the A Stock came forward, and when member banks were confronted with charges of ownership, they all vigorously denied it. Professor Maloney recruited a number of fellow travellers to overhaul the financial system and arrange for the creation of a system of dividend payments direct to every citizen. The rationale for this was that as banks did not actually lend the money of their customers but created credit, depositors were not entitled to interest payments and would in fact have to pay a fee in future for the privilege of the bank holding their money on deposit.

Naturally this did not appeal to the wealthy, but the plus side was that as in future all banking was to be conducted on a fee rather than an interest basis, the cost of borrowing money fell dramatically, and taxation all but disappeared. The money that would have gone to feeding the interest payments of a bunch of anonymous bankers was then diverted into the dividend payment, and this certainly had favourable repercussions for the poorest in society as not only did taxation fall but the unemployed received their dividends totally tax and means test free, which in turn stimulated the economy by destroying the poverty trap into which so many of the poorest members of society became enmeshed.

This was of course by no means the end of all economic problems, but the abolition of all public debt throughout the United States, and by the resulting chain reaction of reforms, throughout the world, freed all nations from the shackles of the international financial cabal.

The most amazing thing about it all was the timidity with which the great finance houses acquiesced. Although the network of blackmail, bribery, coercion and general corruption with which the Rothstein-Rockman axis had subdued nation states had certainly not been a figment of anyone's imagination, least of all South's or Professor Maloney's, future historians would conclude that the real manacles of mankind, which Hunter, South and Maloney had shattered, were not of a massive, all-pervasive financial conspiracy but of simple human nature such as inevitably occurs when one group of men attain power over others. What had made the power of the Rothstein-Rockman financial cabal so apparently omnipotent was the fact that it had existed for so long, and had operated virtually in secret. That was until a stranger from the other side of the Pleiades had dropped out of the sky and bestowed upon mankind the greatest gift since Prometheus stole the fire from Heaven.

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